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Embodying Women's Leadership (WIL02059)

Proposer: Ms Jane Wilkinson

Associate Lecturer - School of Education, Locked Bag 678, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga NSW, 2678.

Paper based on PhD studies conducted through Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria (PhD Principal Supervisor, Associate Professor Jill Blackmore)

Home Address: 31 Fox Street, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2650

Email: jawilkinson@csu.edu.au

Phone Number: (02) 69332491 (Work)

(02) 69217933 (Home)

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Abstract

This paper utilises Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of bodily hexis and habitus to explore the interrelationship between gender, class and ethnicity in the construction of a sense of identity amongst Australian female educational leaders.

In particular, it focuses on one of the key themes which arose from interviews conducted in 2000 with a group of tertiary women leaders from a range of class and ethnic backgrounds - the way in which the women were positioned as embodied individuals - that is, women first and leaders second. It explores the differing strategies the women adopted to accommodate, resist and at times, potentially disrupt, this construction.

This paper represents research in progress towards a Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

Introduction

In the year 2000 I conducted a series of interviews with eight women educational leaders from the primary and tertiary education sectors in Australia, as part of research in progress towards a Doctor of Philosophy. I will begin this paper with five very short anecdotes the women related, in regard to the way in which their appearance and dress appeared to be a constant subtext in their professional lives as leaders. Next, I will use Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, bodily hexis and symbolic violence to explore how such perceptions contributed to a construction of these women leaders' sense of identity. I will conclude the paper by noting the differing strategies the women used to accommodate, resist and challenge these embodied constructions.

Rhoda is the Anglo Australian principal of a large regional primary school in New South Wales. She recounted to me how several years ago, she had come to school dressed in casual jeans and shirt, in order to undertake a school stock take. Two senior female students chastised her for dressing too casually for school. They wished to see her dress as she normally did in a suit.

Lisa is a former Deputy Principal of a regional primary school in rural New South Wales. She is from a mixed Anglo Australian, minority ethnic background. When introduced to parents and community members as a deputy principal, she observed that people often would look astonished. She mused that this reaction appeared to be based on the fact that she was female, short and from a mixed ethnic background.

Suzanne is a senior academic from a minority ethnic background. She noted that when she first assumed her leadership position, despite the fact that staff knew of her seniority, often she was treated as a junior, submissive female.

Simone is a senior academic who is also of minority ethnic origin. She recounted how, when she first took up her senior post, she slipped into the university to gather some papers, dressed in casual clothes. She commented on how when she requested directions to her office, she was completely ignored by the staff. She felt that this was because her inappropriate clothes and minority ethnic appearance meant that people appeared to assume she was the cleaner!

Iris is a senior lecturer of minority ethnic background. She narrated how a colleague ordered her out of the staff room when she first took up her academic position, because he assumed she must be a student due to her appearance, clothes and youth.

The preceding stories appear to be a relatively common part of the reality that underpins the gendered journey of women leaders in the education sector in Australia. For example, in their interviews with seven women in senior management positions within Australian universities, Meyenn and Parker observed that the women's 'clothes, appearance and behaviour were matters of constant comment, *for both men and women ...*'. Judith Sachs and Jill Blackmore note that dressing in a professional manner, was part of the way in which Australian primary and secondary school female administrators signaled that they were 'in control' and thus, would be perceived as 'efficient by both peers, colleagues and members of the community'. Susan Chase, an American feminist researcher, suggests that these kinds of stories form part of the overall narratives of 'ambiguous empowerment' through which women leaders such as school administrators strive to make sense of 'their contradictory experiences of power and subjection' (Chase 1995, p.x).

My second and third observations form the basis of this paper. I would argue that one of the fundamental links between these vignettes is that of power, that is, their narratives may be

suggesting something about the specific nature of dominant power relations underpinning the primary and tertiary education sectors in Australia. The women educational leaders' dress, physical appearance and bodies appear to be read by some of their colleagues, staff, community members and students as signifying a lack of the implied, 'natural' male qualities of authority and power. In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, the women leaders appear to be subjected to a form of symbolic violence. The implied construction of a binary opposition between women/bodies/lack of power and authority and men/mind/power/authority may be working as a powerful means of keeping these women in their (inferior) place and thus legitimizing dominant power relations within their work contexts in the primary and tertiary education sectors.

The way in which these women's leadership is embodied hints at the possibility that power relations within the two education sectors may not only be gendered but based upon other categories, such as class, ethnicity and age. Simone is ignored by her new colleagues and staff, not simply because she is a woman but because she looks like a female, minority ethnic cleaner (and thus is constructed as belonging to the working class). Iris, Lisa and Suzanne appear to have their leadership challenged both because of their minority ethnic physical appearance, as well as their femaleness. In addition, both Iris and Suzanne's ethnic appearance is constructed by others as youthful (and therefore lacking authority), and in Suzanne's case, as submissiveness. Rhoda's dress is apparently read by the two gate keeping female students, as not fitting within a particular code of authority - the female 'suit' of dress or skirt which she normally wears. Such focus upon gender, class, ethnicity and age suggests that leadership in the education sectors may be potentially constructed on the basis of an implicit authority which is not only male, but middle-aged, middle-class and Anglo-Australian. My paper will examine these possible constructions in greater depth.

As in all stories, there is more than one point of view. I have begun this paper by alluding to selected examples from the narratives of five women leaders. However, the interviews I conducted with these women suggested that there is another aspect to the construction of power relations within the two education sectors which the preceding incidents do not reveal. Other parts of their narratives reveal a sense of agency and resistance to these gendered (and possibly racialised and classed) constructions of leadership. Indeed for some women, coming from a minority ethnic background, created a form of symbolic capital within their particular educational setting, which was positively advantageous. Hence, my fourth observation is that contestation and disruption of more traditional constructions of masculine authority within the two education sectors, is also a crucial part of these women's leadership experiences. For example, each of the women interviewed read the focus upon their body, physical appearance and dress somewhat differently. For some, it appeared to be accepted as part of the irritating but fairly trivial flotsam and jetsam which accompanied their ascent to power. For one woman, it was a fundamental statement of sexual politics which demanded action. For another, it was the first time in her life that the mantle of professional sexual neutrality which she had donned, was interrogated. However, no matter how the women leaders chose to deal with such embodiment, they all consciously adopted strategies to deal with these constructions, be it in the form of conscious accommodation, active resistance or disruption. Hence, the way in which women leaders are read as embodied individuals and their attempts to contest and resist such interpellations, forms the key focus of this paper.

Habitus, bodily hexis and symbolic violence

In order to conceptualise the way in which the women participants came to construct a sense of their own identity as leaders, I have utilized Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, bodily hexis and symbolic violence. Bourdieu's theories assisted me in making sense of the constitutive nature of the categories of gender, class and ethnicity in terms of the very specific ways in which they work together to form a fundamental core of self identity that is

enacted at the physical level in the individuals interviewed (for example, the focus upon their femaleness through people's reactions to their dress, physical appearance and bodies).

Habitus

Habitus are those sets of cultural practices, behaviours, judgements, tastes and overall forms of human conduct which we perform almost unconsciously (because they are so-taken for granted) in our everyday lives and which are acquired in early childhood through 'experience' rather than through 'explicit teaching' (hence their 'durable' nature) . The 'principles' which 'generate and organize' these cultural practices are those basic classificatory or taxonomic systems, exemplified in binary oppositions such as, 'male/female, front/back, up/down, hot/cold' , which human societies use in order to 'make sense' of the world. Crucially, these taxonomies 'are rooted in the body' and generate our everyday, taken-for-granted cultural practices. For example, the way we hold a pen when we write, the fact that we are taught to sit up straight in class or at the meal table, that little girls in our society are taught to keep their knees together when wearing a dress or skirt, are examples of 'dispositions to bodily comportment ... to act or to hold oneself or to gesture in a certain way' (Jenkins, 1992) which reveal the habitus, the deeply-embedded cultural understandings of particular groups or individuals within a society.

Bourdieu has argued that the gender order is the most fundamental opposition in relations of domination within society and forms the basis of all other relations of power. Crucially for the purposes of this paper, he observes that symbolic power is exercised and reproduced most powerfully through the body and in particular, in the bodily oppositions between male and female which in themselves enact 'two systems of value' .

Bodily Hexis and Symbolic Violence

Bourdieu's emphasis upon 'incorporation' raises a crucial aspect of his theory - that habitus chiefly is embodied through bodily 'hexis', the 'deportment ... manner and style in which actors "carry themselves": stance, gait, gesture, etcetera' . This hexis itself is:

political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking. The opposition between male and female is realized in posture, in the gestures and movements of the body

Symbolic violence is used by Bourdieu as a means of explaining the way in which dominant power relations within a society are experienced as legitimate by the members of that society. This is achieved by:

the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning (i.e. culture) upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate. This legitimacy obscures the powerrelations which permit that imposition to be successful .

Bourdieu's articulation of the politics of the gendered body and the ways in which the 'socially produced body is thus necessarily also a political body, or rather an embodied politics', picks up on the ways in which the most seemingly trivial activities (teaching children 'how to move, dress, and eat'), are 'thoroughly political, in that they impose on them an unspoken understanding of legitimate ways to (re)present their bodies to themselves and others' . In other words, they can also be a form of symbolic violence.

In relation to the women leaders interviewed, the apparent 'problematisation' of their bodies in terms of their appearance and dress, despite some of the women's attempts to adjust their habitus to the masculinist primary or tertiary educational field, appeared to act as a form of symbolic violence. As Toril Moi notes, the 'body - and its apparel such as clothing, gestures, make-up and so on - becomes a kind of constant reminder ... of sociosexual power relations'

I will examine the embodied experiences of the women leaders through the focus upon their dress, as this emerged as a key category in the interviews. In addition, I will examine the interplay of gender, class, ethnicity and to a lesser degree, age, within this category.

Dress

Simone, who is from a working class, Southern European background, recounts the following story of the first meeting she attended as a senior academic in a regional university. Eager to belong/fit in to what she perceived to be a very tight workplace culture, Simone dressed in what she judged to be an appropriate outfit for a very hot day and listened carefully throughout the meeting. She was just congratulating herself on having succeeded in her first foray, when a respected (male) friend and colleague commented:

'You blew it ... you had armpits'. I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'Well Simone you wore a sleeveless dress. If you looked around the table ... there was nobody who didn't have sleeves on. The men had sleeves, the women had sleeves ... The first lesson that you have to learn is that power doesn't have a body and it certainly doesn't have armpits and you need to go in there covered'. So not only did you have to be careful about what you said, you had to be careful about how you looked.

Simone, in her apparent naivety as a new senior academic, appears to unsettle an unwritten code of authority by revealing her body and hence, her femaleness, through her lack of sleeves and the consequent exposure of her armpits. The act of 'covering up' one's body on what was a very hot day, may signify the middle-class, for the meeting is taking place indoors in a space where people can wear sleeves without discomfort. Hence, one reading of the act of covering up one's body is that knowledge and authority are thus coded as belonging to the professional, middle-class. It is possible that by not wearing sleeves, Simone may be rendering visible, the middle-class, and masculine nature of authority, knowledge and the mind within the meeting. As Simone observes:

I don't know how true it is for ... metropolitan areas but certainly power seems to not have a body. Knowledge and authority doesn't have a body, all it has is a mind and a voice that operates in a coded way so any other visible things that distinguish you obviously seem to create some element of ... unsettling, some unsettling thing. ...

The fact that both males and females at the meeting 'covered up' despite the heat, may be read as signalling an extra and very different connotation for women as opposed to men. 'Covering up' for men (for example, the act of wearing a suit) is connoted within Western society as signaling a form of intellectual authority - it is the mind and not the body which is on display. Sleeves conceal and potentially neutralize the masculine body, as opposed to wearing a singlet which reveals one's upper body and musculature. For a woman covering up may suggest modesty - a highly desirable female trait - as well as concealment of the female body, so that one's femaleness is potentially neutralised. Such covering-up may also suggest a fear of the potentially subversive power of femaleness to masculine ways of leading. At the same time as neutralizing women's bodies, covering up suggests that the

'gender advantage' which some males may gain from these dress codes is also covered up/concealed/disguised and thus remains unproblematised. Finally, as Simone's colleague observes, the revealing of armpits signals a number of things. They can be seen as relating to class - professional men seldom wear clothes that will reveal their armpits at work - whereas physical labourers often do. Middle class, Anglo Australian women may wear sleeveless dresses or tops but often will shave their armpits in order to fit certain Western stereotypes of femininity. The exposure of armpits also may connote stereotypes of Western feminists and thus, may be read as threatening to masculinist power relations within academia.

What is of particular interest is the way in which Simone responds to her colleague's comments. She initially observes:

So that was my first lesson because I was shocked and stunned and I thought how could I have made that mistake and indeed it was true you'd never imagine a man sleeveless in a board meeting or ... the senior scientists and women and whatever they all were quite modest ... in terms of covering their bodies ...

When asked whether she modified her dress accordingly, Simone replies:

Oh, absolutely I have never ever since then gone into a meeting without sleeves, never. I have never. I thought I'm not going to fight this one. Right or wrong I don't need to get this wrong again and if somebody's pointed this out to me, and so I did actually from then on make sure that I always wore ...

The sleeveless dress incident appears to signal the gendered and middle class nature of authority within the university in which Simone worked. As Simone notes:

universities are so ... elite in a number of ways ... there's kind of a way in which an academic woman should look ... and behave and be ... if she's going to stand alongside the (senior academics) ... not a lot of women reach that stage because they don't get time or opportunity and not a lot of them are at the senior level so most of them are with their flat shoes tutoring.

In terms of the incident recounted at the beginning of this paper (when Simone is misread by university staff as the cleaner and devalued accordingly), it would appear that the apparently dominant, middle class, Anglo Australian codes of the university through which Simone's bodily hexis is being read, signify her lack of cultural and social fit within this particular institution. Bourdieu postulates that the habitus exists both at an individual level and in the various social fields such as education, politics etcetera. One of the key aspects of habitus identified by Bourdieu is individuals developing a feeling for the game, a sense of fit within a particular field, rather like 'a fish in water'. This sense of fit is developed through early childhood experiences, or, as Loic Wacquant observes, 'when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself as "fish in water" and takes the world about itself for granted'. There is no sense in which Simone takes the tertiary world in which she works for granted. Simone's dress incidents are a constant reminder that she is a fish out of water and that her university plays by rules that are not of her or other women/minority ethnic or working class people's making. Clearly, Simone is a sufficient fish in the water to have gained a senior leadership position at the university. In this sense, she has learned to play the game very well. And yet, her sense of alienation is palpable. It is a lack of fit which Simone herself recognizes clearly. At one point in the interview, she muses in relation to the university in which she works, 'maybe people like us shouldn't be here. That's a funny thing'

to say but in the end I think ... maybe they've tamed me ... They have broken my spirit, that's the truth'.

After recounting the cleaner incident, she observes:

if you're a woman senior academic, a wog woman as well, well God help you ... who and what are you and how dare you? Particularly in the social realm because here you are trying to make generalisations about a community that they think you're a visitor in (you know) or the cleaner's daughter or the recipient of benefits so when did you get so big to be able to make pronouncements?

Simone's reaction to these incidents is to accede to the middle class dress code of Australian universities. It is a conscious decision to accommodate such codes made on the basis that these incidents are:

minor things and I don't want to give the impression that these minor things impede, really impede your ability to perform but they're just there in the background all the time. There's ... just this kind of subplot in ... your life which you constantly have to say, 'That doesn't matter, I'm not going to let it come to the foreground'.

This is where Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence can be usefully applied to the preceding incidents. Although Simone may argue that such incidents are minor, she on the other hand notes that they introduce a 'kind of subplot' in her life. Ensuring that such incidents remain a subplot and do not 'come to the foreground' subsumes one's time and energy. In addition, it is the way in which Simone's dress is read in the armpits incident as a gendered body and in the cleaner incident as a classed and racialised, as well as gendered body, which implies that some form of Bourdieu's 'gentle violence' may be occurring. It is in such minutiae - that is, our day-to-day dealings with others - that symbolic violence such as racism and sexism may be challenged or reconstituted. However, it is the very subtle nature of such incidents that makes them so difficult to pinpoint and resist.

In a similar fashion, Rhoda, the regional primary principal, observes:

I'm very conscious that, the impression that I make, or the first thing that people see of me, needs to be very professional ... I suppose it's a ... bit of a quirk on my part ... unless it's very, very cold I tend not to wear slacks to work. And if I do wear slacks, I tend to wear ... trousers and a blazer, very rarely that I would go in trousers and a jumper and ... there's no way, apart from maybe a sports carnival I would go dressed ... in a tracksuit ...

When asked why she felt the need to dress in this way, Rhoda replied:

I think it was the whole professional thing rather than the feminine thing ... principals will always wear a tie ... I don't do it as a power thing ... even though there have been quite a few comments made about my red jumpers or my red blazer ... I think it's part of the thing, if you want teaching to be regarded as a profession, then you give off that impression - if you see it as a serious career. I suppose that's part of the problem that the community do not see you as a professional.

The comments made about Rhoda's red jumpers or blazer appear as a kind of subtext in her leadership. They point to a more general form of surveillance in rural areas where women educational leaders are even fewer than in urban areas. As Rhoda observes:

Sometimes parents are very threatened by a female principal until they get to know you ... I still get the perception at times that they're waiting for you to fall flat on your face and ... underneath you're probably very conscious. It's not a top conscious thing but it is there ... at times you sort of ... find yourself stopping and thinking ... which way am I going to say this?

This is also where the rural/urban divide in Australia is apparent. Rhoda is an older female principal in a conservative regional community where there are very few women educational leaders and where education does not always carry high levels of symbolic capital. The pressure upon her to conform to particular expectations about women's appearance, particularly at the level of principal, is very powerful. Rhoda consciously utilizes her dress as a means of sending a message that she wishes to be considered as a professional first, rather than a woman, while denying that this has anything to do with power. Yet the comments made about Rhoda's wearing of red none too subtly remind her that one's dress is also a statement about power. The professionalism associated with this form of educational leadership appears to be highly gendered for although one could argue that male principals are also subject to the need to maintain a professional persona (male rural principals in larger schools often wear a tie), the comments about Rhoda's wearing of red connote an underlying message that power and women are not necessarily synonymous. The message is - you may have power as a woman but don't flaunt it. In a similar fashion, male principals in rural areas probably would be 'stirred' if they came to work every day wearing a suit but a tie is a small but subtle sign of power about which comments are not made. It is part of the acceptable and expected uniform of male authority in many larger rural and regional schools.

In the incident in which Rhoda is rebuked by the Year Six girls for her casual dress, it would be difficult to imagine a similar situation in which students would feel sufficiently free to rebuke a male principal for dressing inappropriately or too casually. On the one hand, it can be argued that the fact that it is older girls who act as Rhoda's gatekeepers, suggests that the girls have a strong identification to Rhoda as a principal and female role model and are very conscious of the need for her to keep up appearances. On the other hand, it suggests there is a double standard operating in regard to male and female leaders' dress and in terms of gender and authority (parents generally do not wait for male principals to fall flat on their faces). The implication for both Rhoda and Simone is that as a woman leader (and in Simone's case, a minority ethnic woman leader), you are being watched and judged, be it by a friend/colleague, your students, parents or the community. This leads to a form of self-surveillance; a form of disciplining of the body through dress which appears to operate as a kind of symbolic violence to legitimize masculine and Anglo Australian relations of ruling within their educational workplaces. However, it is also important not to write off both women's accommodation to this unwritten text of power, as simply a passive capitulation to dominant relations of ruling. Both Rhoda, and Simone in particular are making judicious and pragmatic judgements that there are other battles to fight that are more important, both for themselves as leaders and for women in general. However, as Simone observes, such accommodation may incur a personal cost and this is where the concept of symbolic violence is so powerful in capturing this damage. Simone reflects:

You have to be realistic about what you can and can't do ... as I modified my dress, I've ... learnt ... to modify the way I deal with people ... It doesn't mean I've modified it in all terrains or that my values have changed ... It's just hurtful at an emotional level. At a practical level, you say, 'Fine, I can do this'.

It is significant that Rhoda and Simone are both older women leaders and products of the second wave of feminism. By contrast, the younger Iris is a product of a generation for whom the discourses of feminism proclaimed 'girls can do anything'. She utilizes her body as a powerful means of resistance to the dominant habitus of the Anglo Australian, middle class field of the tertiary institution in which she works. Iris refuses to accept the rules of the game. Moreover, she proclaims her lack of fit through a deliberate choice of dress, make up and hairstyle which celebrates her working class, minority ethnic origins. It makes a clear statement about a new and different discourse of feminism. Iris remarks:

(W)hatever I wear or not wear, they're all performances - they're all ways of being and ways of putting on costumes and this is what I feel the most comfortable in ... you're going to have to basically look beyond what you think is the 'bimbo look' or the 'Woggie bimbo', the 'Wog chick look' and deal with me as a professional. And that's been really good because it ... unsettles the people ... you still walk in somewhere and it actually unsettles people a bit and you just have those gaps of silence where they're just still trying to suss you out.

Iris was the youngest of the women leaders interviewed. She appeared to shift comfortably between the largely Anglo-Australian, middle-class paradigm of academia and her minority ethnic and working-class background via an acute awareness of the ways in which ethnicity, class and sexuality are all simply performances of identity. However, her heightened awareness has come about through her own often painful and intimate encounters with discrimination in the Australian tertiary sector.

Drawing on the strength of her family upbringing which encouraged her to '(d)o it your way', Iris constructs a resistant set of practices which potentially disarticulate the discourse of 'wog bimbo' and then rearticulate it as a powerful means of claiming and expressing her multiple and shifting subject positions. She refuses to hide her gender, class or ethnicity by adopting the sexually neutral style of many female academics (described by Simone as 'short hair, flat shoes, be as ... unwomanly as I can') and instead consciously performs and dis/plays her femininity, class of origin and ethnicity through her long hair, feminine/sexual clothes and high heels. She observes:

And I actually think that women need to get beyond all that look, select from the range of gender performances available. This is very post-structural post feminism here but (you know) that everything is a uniform and everything is conforming to something, therefore select what you feel the most comfortable in. I refuse on a hot day like this in this office to wear jeans because I have to sit here and they get sticky so I will wear a little frock and I will wear comfortable clothes and if you've got a problem with that in a meeting you've got the problem, not me and listen to what I've got to say. So I think women need to somehow get beyond that ...

Iris's tactics become a political strategy to disturb the naturalized constructions of Anglo-Australian masculinity (and femininity) which pervade the field of education in

Australia and which are revealed in the gaps of silence which greet Iris's appearance. I read Iris's appearance as an active intervention in the politics of representation - a proud and confident statement of the multiple identities she occupies as a woman, an academic, a member of a minority ethnic group, a mother and a daughter.

It is fruitful to compare the contrasting political stance which Simone, Rhoda and Iris take in terms of their physical appearance. Both Simone and Rhoda accede to the gender cover-up,

with Simone arguing on pragmatic grounds, 'you owe it to yourself to give the dream a shot but ... then you've got to not die for a dream because that's stupid'. Iris as a younger woman academic consciously contests the unspoken dress code for academics, utilizing it as a potentially potent weapon for rendering less unequal, the relations of power that are linked to gender and class within academia. It could well be argued that Iris as a relatively junior academic has less authority and thus has more freedom to challenge these kinds of unwritten rules of power and authority. As a middle manager, Simone is caught between the needs of her staff and the demands of those senior to her and hence, her ability and willingness to challenge these codes is severely circumscribed by the demands of her position. Rhoda works in a conservative rural area where to be a woman leader is in itself, a potentially radical stance. In addition, however, Iris as a member of a younger generation of Australian women has grown up in an educational system which resonated with the discourses of equal opportunity for girls. It could be argued that Iris has been exposed to a broader set of discourses and subject positions from which she can contest the inequality that such gender, class and ethnic advantaging confers.

The embodiment of women leaders ... Some final thoughts

The production of specifically female/male bodies is a fundamental example in Bourdieu's research, of the ways in which symbolic violence works to produce and reproduce dominant power relations in society. As such, I find the concept provides a particularly powerful explanation of the focus upon women leaders' dress (and the virtual silence in regard to men's dress) which peppered the interviews I conducted with women educational leaders. However, where I part company with Bourdieu, is the deterministic 'spin' which he places on underlying structures of power relations which symbolic violence perpetuates, at the expense of both individual and collective agency and resistance. The very presence of Rhoda, Iris and Simone in leadership positions within the primary and tertiary education sectors, suggests a challenging of traditional power structures. Such women do not emerge from a vacuum, so clearly there must be structures within their communities that have supported their ascension to leadership. Their presence suggests that they are not simply token leaders, but represents a process of over thirty years of collective action by women in education, within their individual communities and in society as a whole, to resist and disrupt dominant power structures. More radically, the younger generation Iris's attempts to politicize her body through the adoption of particular types of clothing and make up, suggests that the internalization of a gendered, classed and racialised habitus is not the deterministic process that Bourdieu appears to suggest it may be, but may in fact act as a powerful source of resistance.

References

Appendix One

Why examine women educational leaders from a range of class and ethnic backgrounds?

Despite over two decades of affirmative action policies and strategies within education bureaucracies in the primary, post primary and tertiary sectors - women as a category remain clustered in the junior ranks with men in the more senior administrative and management roles. This phenomenon of vertical segregation of the teaching profession (women clustered in teaching, men in administration) parallels the situation in other Anglo Saxon countries, such as New Zealand, the USA and Britain . Bob Connell uses the phrase 'gender regime' to describe the 'gendered character of specific institutions' such as education in the modern state (Connell cited in . Women in both the primary and academic sectors remain underrepresented in all levels of leadership. For example, DETYA statistics reveal that in 2000, women made up 52% of the total academic workforce, but were overly represented in the Levels A and B - the lowest levels of classification (70%). Conversely, 20% of all women academics were employed at Senior Lecturer Level C compared with 26% of the total workforce and 10% at Levels D and E (the professorial levels) compared with 22% of the total workforce . In 1998 in the New South Wales public education sector, primary women teachers constituted 75% of the total teacher workforce but held only 56.2% of all promotion positions .

Feminist research in the past decade has seen an explosion of writings specifically focused upon women as a category in relation to leadership. These include areas as diverse as agriculture ; ; ; business ; ; ; education ; ; ; ; ; and notions of leadership in general . Traditional leadership literature is critiqued by feminists for being sexist by virtue of its almost exclusive focus upon the male as leader and masculinist values of leadership . However, much contemporary Australian feminist research on leadership focuses almost exclusively upon leadership as a gendered construct, whilst ignoring or placing in the background, categories such as ethnicity and class (sexuality is another category which this paper does not deal with, but about which there is a silence in both the mainstream and feminist leadership literature). It thus appears to ignore the way in which the three categories interrelate to produce differential forms of power relations. By its omission of the perspectives and voices of women leaders from a range of different class and ethnic backgrounds, the feminist research appears to imply that leadership is a property of the middle-class, Anglo Australian male or female. Although some feminist texts on leadership do touch on issues of class or ethnicity in a somewhat minimal way ; ; , the overall effect suggests a form of tokenism. Yet, given the visibility and prominence of debates around ethnicity in particular, in Australia in the last decade, (for example, in terms of reconciliation, the stolen generations, multiculturalism and so called 'illegal immigrants'), such an omission from the research is particularly troubling. Hence, my decision to interview a selection of women educational leaders from a range of minority ethnic and class backgrounds was made for two reasons. Firstly, it was an attempt to disrupt the apparently taken for granted discourses of leadership which work to constitute Anglo Australian, middle class women as the centre of many Australian feminist analyses of leadership. Secondly, I hoped to begin to construct 'an alternative set of meanings ... through such contestation' .

Appendix Two

Methods

In the year 2000, I interviewed eight women who held positions of seniority in the primary and tertiary education sectors of Australia, as part of an initial exploration of the way in which gender, ethnicity and class interrelate to construct a sense of identity amongst Australian women leaders in education. The first two women interviewed held positions of seniority within the primary sector (Deputy Principal and above) and the following six women in the tertiary sector were at senior lecturer level or above. I had made an initial decision in my Doctorate of Philosophy to interview the two primary women as part of a small-scale pilot study exploring the ways in which the mainstream media's discourses around women leaders were circulated/ taken up or articulated by actual women leaders. My selection of the two women was based on the pragmatic grounds that I was unsure whether such interviews would necessarily yield much useful data as there had been a lot of research conducted on women and leadership in the education sector in Australia. Hence, I selected women who worked geographically closest to me. I did not want to waste a lot of time travelling if it turned out that what the women had to say wouldn't necessarily add to the body of knowledge 'we' (white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class feminists) already had in regard to women and leadership in education. I used the snowball technique, that is, seeking potential interviewees out by word of mouth. I spoke to key informants I had within the Department of Education and compiled a list of potential candidates. The interviews were relatively unstructured, consisting of a series of nine open-ended questions which took approximately an hour to explore. Three of the key discourses which emerged from an analysis of the interviews was the interrelationship between one's gender, ethnicity and class in terms of the way in which rural women educational leaders were constructed as leaders by their colleagues, students and members of the local community. Wishing to explore this aspect of the data further, I selected six tertiary women educational leaders to interview. The decision to interview the six tertiary women was made on the basis that it was the only education sector in which either my supervisor or I were able to come up with a sufficient number of women leaders from a range of ethnic and class backgrounds.

The interview questions were open-ended and varied from one to two hours each. The two primary women held deputy principal and principal level positions respectively, in the New South Wales public education system. The six tertiary women held senior academic positions in universities across Australia: two were at executive level (positions held above the level of Deans and Heads of Schools); three were from middle management (Deans and Heads or Deputy Heads of Schools, Institutes or Research Centres) and one was a senior lecturer. One woman was Anglo Australian, two were Indigenous Australians, two were from Southern European backgrounds and one was of Chinese origins. Four of the six women identified themselves as being from working-class origins, one viewed herself as from a mixed working class/middle class background and the other nominated her family of origin as middle class. The interviews were analysed using feminist discourse analysis, underpinned by Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, bodily hexis and symbolic violence. I attempted to identify the gaps and silences within the interviews as well as focusing upon the dominant discourses which emerged.